

*Org. 1 Reporter's Committee
on Freedom of the Press*

Press Rights Unit Formed By Reporters

By United Press International

A group of reporters has formed a committee to counter what it calls "government threats to freedom of the press."

The group will furnish legal advice to reporters faced with subpoenas by government agencies seeking disclosure of confidential information and news sources. And it will sponsor a study of reporters' rights.

Thirty-five Washington-based reporters attended the first meeting yesterday of the group, called the Reporter's Committee on Freedom of the Press, at Georgetown University.

In a statement, the reporters said court-ordered testimony from newsmen, especially about such groups as the Black Panthers and Students for a Democratic Society, has destroyed the trust of many news sources.

Reporters recently became concerned about the issue when the Justice Department said it would ask courts to issue subpoenas without prior notice for the notes of newsmen who had written stories on the Black Panthers.

Atty. Gen. John N. Mitchell later apologized for the action and said the department would return to its earlier policy of negotiating with reporters before asking for information.